2: Villiers T-5 (1938-39) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2
Kuwait MC1

K MA 505 565

Negro origin, the descendants of slaves, though not now slaves themselves. Many others are of Iranian origin. Almost none are Bedouin, for the Arab Bedouin is not a seafaring man. In Kuwait, the callings open to the low-class Iranian are restricted to portering, pearling (either as diver or as tender), and sailing. Both Iranians and Negroes work splendidly, are loyal, competent, and well disciplined.

MA 565 426 465 228 428

As the *nakhoda* class is tied to the merchant by a structure of debt, so also are the sailors tied to the *nakhoda* class in the same way. All deep-sea sailing is paid for on a shares system, and there are no wages. Often the *nakhoda* of the deep-sea dhow has an interest in a pearling vessel (though not now to anything like the same extent as in former years), and the sailor may be bound to him through pearling debts, either his own or inherited. The more iniquitous practices in the pearling business structure have long been on the way out, largely because of the excellent example set at Bahrein, but the debt tradition stands and is almost impossible to eradicate.

MA 505 511 342 291 515 501 565

The sailors go to sea because they know no other life, and they make a wretched living by incredibly difficult methods. They have no possessions other than the clothes they stand in, and one or two spare gowns, a good headcloth, and a few sarongs. Their toothbrush is the twig of a tree; their ablutions are made five times daily at a mosque well, or in the sea; they know no shelter and rarely have a bed. The younger seamen, I have noticed, often have no home other than the *suq*, or native bazaar, where they coil down in their rough cloaks for a night's sleep on a bench in a cheap coffee shop, or in the sand. At sea, they stretch out on the deck, beneath the stars, for there is no such thing as accommodation for the seamen or anyone else in most dhows. The officers and the more important merchants live on a bench round the wheel, in the stern of the ship; the seamen lie down anywhere.

MA 565 554 165

What keeps the seaman a disciplined and more or less contented worker is his hope of reward, principally from smuggling or his own ventures, and his ambition to get hold of a tiny shop in the *suq* of his home town. This is an ambition he rarely achieves. His more usual fate is to die young, especially if he be also a pearl diver.

4: Bowen C-5 (1950) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

becomes no longer available, the deepwater dhow is doomed. The dhow cannot operate in competition with steam if it has to pay the sailors respectable wages; that is, as long as the merchants demand one-half of the dhow earnings.

While traffic in human cargo is virtually a thing of the past, the dhows that coast along the Arabian, African, and Indian shores still have slave crews on them. Although not owned bodily, the crews are bound economically to their masters, the *nakhodas*, while the *nakhodas* themselves are economic slaves of the merchants. But, while the crews get little actual compensation when the pay-off finally comes, they are happy and well-fed and have known nothing else. Allah is compassionate, and there is always a Paradise waiting for their poor souls!

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Maritime Arabs MK2

who had "escaped from the account book," as the Arabs put it.

The amount that a season's work brings in is now a matter of indifference. However great it may be all that happens is that the sum is written to the diver's credit on the books, and he is given an advance when he asks for it and the captain is willing to allow it. There are certain times during the year when it is the custom to give these advances—the beginning and the close of the diving season and once or twice during the idle months. A good season means somewhat more liberal advances and a bad season smaller ones. The diver, however, is absolutely at the captain's mercy in all this. As a matter of fact he gets in ordinary years an amount that is sufficient for life, and a more comfortable life than that of the Bedouin. The diver's standards of life, however, are considerably below those of a date gardener in a good oasis. It is to the captain's interest, of course, to have his men more or less well fed and satisfied, and to have the glamour of pearl diving maintained so that others will be attracted to the work, so a great show is made of calculating the season's receipts and the rare man who is not in debt really does get a fairly liberal reward for the season's exhausting labor. The crucial point, of course, is the law that prevents a mistreated and dissatisfied diver from changing his employer or from changing his residence. The captain could afford to give his men an amount that would allow them a considerably better mode of life. Doubtless if public sentiment becomes too threatening, he will do so. The thing he will not do is to consent to any alteration of the law that at present delivers the debtor into his hands,

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Maritime Arabs MK 2
Bahrain M22

such a number of chronic running ears. The lungs are often affected, and all along the diving coast pulmonary tuberculosis is common. This is not remarkable when we know that in the opening days of the season the men frequently dive in water that is so cold that they spit blood. Many return from their summer of semi-starvation and unsuitable diet of rice and dates with their gums sore and bleeding from scurvy.

Living conditions in the community[1] are what might be expected. Disease is common. The death rate is high. Poverty is universal. In good years the standard of life is none too high. In bad years it is reduced almost to the starvation point. During a hard year the food of the divers is poor in quality and scanty in amount almost to the degree of partial starvation. They usually live in date-stick huts, and in the winter must frequently shiver in unwarmed houses because they have no money for fuel.

In such communities there is little or no interest in education. A diver has reason enough, one might suppose, for wanting to know how to read and write and keep his own accounts, but it is rare that one of them knows as much as that, and apparently it is equally unusual to find one who is trying to educate his children so that they may escape the slavery that binds him. The boys are frequently taken out to learn pearl diving while they are still under twelve. In Bahrein the American Mission has tried for many years to develop educational work of an elementary sort, but has found it practically impossible because there is no demand for such things. The considerable Persian community in the city has made efforts from time to time to establish educational work for its own boys. The Persian schools exist for a little

1 [of pearl divers -- Analyst]

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East Maritime Arabs Mkp

The larger ports of Kuwait, Bahrein and Dibai have also a large community of artisans and lesser merchants. These serve not simply the local diving population, but also act as manufacturers and wholesalers for the whole of Central Arabia. Practically the entire import and export trade for the interior of the peninsula goes through these three towns, and the merchant and artisan communities are large and prosperous.

It is difficult to be optimistic about the general situation in these pearl-diving communities. The actual material condition of the divers is bad enough, but worse by far is the discouragement and despair that have settled down upon the whole community. No one tries very hard to get out of debt, for he knows that barring some unforeseen miracle, he cannot do so no matter how long and hard he works and how economically he lives. There is little thrift; a stranger is often shocked by the waste that divers show in their personal and household expenditures. There is not the slightest effort, for instance, to discover what sort of clothing will give the most service for the money invested. Expensive or cheap, economical or wasteful, it is all the same. With luck when the present supply of money is gone, the captain will make another liberal allowance, and nothing better than that can be hoped for, no matter what economy and thrift are practised.

The conditions outlined above are those that obtain in the northern towns, chiefly in Bahrein. There is a second large diving community in the region known as the Pirate Coast, whose capital and largest city is Dibai. Its piratical character is a matter of history now long past, but it still makes a good deal of trouble for the British who police the Gulf and maintain order along the coast.

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Maritime Arabs MK2

721 Political troubles became acute some ten years ago or more, and for many years no foreigner was allowed to land on that coast. It was a double pleasure, then, to be invited to visit that part of Arabia four years ago. It
567 is the one remaining nest of slavery in eastern Arabia and the district is still troublesome at times to the bearers of constituted authority, but nothing of that sort is ap-
576 parent to the visiting doctor. The rich and the poor alike are most courteous and pleasant hosts.

228 In this district[1] the pearl-diving system is the same as
461 in Bahrein, but the men do not work nearly so hard. They set out to work later in the season, although if the temperature of the water were the only element in their decision, they might be at work sooner, for they lie farther to the south and their water warms up considerably before that near Bahrein. They return to the shore oftener and show much less energy in their work. The pearl banks in the region of the Pirate Coast are less rich than the Bahrein banks, and as might be expected, their catch is much less valuable than that of the boats farther
511 north. It is interesting to see that divers on the Pirate Coast live at about the same general level as those in Bahrein. They could not live at a much lower level, for it would mean starvation. The larger receipts in the Bahrein area have as their only result the creation of a much richer class of pearl merchants than the similar class on the Pirate Coast.

567 Unquestionably it is the slaves who have reduced the
464 standards of what a day's and a season's work ought to
461 be to its present level on the Pirate Coast. Most of these slaves are negroes from Africa. A few are Baluchs from the Makran coast between India and Persia. They do not number over one-half the divers, probably far

[1] The Pirate Coast and its capital at Dibai --Andy]